

August 1, 2018

The Honorable Sonny Perdue
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue,

I write to you regarding the recently announced Trade Assistance Package which is intended to help farmers and ranchers struggling with market instability. It appears the program, as currently conceived, will not provide Missouri farmers with a level playing field of assistance.

More than 30 percent of Missouri is currently experiencing severe drought which is already leading to crop losses and will result in significantly diminished yields. I have received reports that soybean growers in many Missouri counties will experience a total crop loss due to lack of moisture. In addition, corn growers in many northern and southwest Missouri counties expect to see only a third of their normal yields. Despite their best efforts to deal with the market instability and increasing input costs, the situation is even more dire for Missouri farmers suffering from drought.

I have been informed that the Market Facilitation Program (MFP), which will provide direct payments to producers, may calculate payments based on 2018 production rather than historic production. This approach will leave many drought-affected Missouri farmers without any relief while others who are fortunate enough to have a crop will receive MFP payments. In order to make certain that the program provides a balanced level of assistance to all impacted farmers, I urge you to apply specific considerations for producers experiencing extreme drought conditions. For instance, using a calculation based on historic yields for counties with drought designations will ensure that relief is provided to producers dealing with uncertainty on multiple fronts.

As you know, decisions made by farmers during this year's harvest season will not just affect current year returns. Although the assistance package is meant to address the short term market disruption, failure to provide adequate and equitable assistance to Missouri farmers this year will adversely impact their returns for last year, the current year, and for part of next year. It is my hope this impact may be mitigated by taking into account historic yields for drought-affected farmers.

I appreciate your attention to this important situation and your commitment to helping Missouri farmers. I look forward to working with you to craft an assistance package that provides effective relief for farmers in Missouri and throughout the country.

Sincere regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Roy Blunt", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Senator Roy Blunt
U.S. Senator

cc: Undersecretary Bill Northey, Administrator Richard Fordyce, Undersecretary Greg Ibach,
Chief Economist.